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LETTER DATED 13 JANUARY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government and with reference to the letter dated 12 January 1998 from Mr. Richard Butler, Executive Chairman of the Special Commission, addressed to you concerning the composition of the inspection team headed by the United States national Scott Ritter, I should like to provide the following clarifications:

1. In his letter dated 9 January 1998 addressed to Mr. Riyad al-Qaysi, Under-Secretary at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Executive Chairman himself stated that the inspection team sent to Iraq was to be led by Ritter and would consist of 16 persons. In the letter he added to this 'and others as required from the Baghdad Monitoring and Verification Centre (BMVC)'. This is an expression that is used in all of the notifications sent to us when an inspection team is to come from New York.

2. It is normal for any inspection team coming to Iraq from New York to be assisted by persons working at the BMVC. However, their participation is mostly of a logistic nature (with them acting, for example, as drivers, equipment operators, personnel used to encircle a site to be inspected on the outside and to observe entries and departures, etc.) and, as is clear from its nature, such participation is not connected with the substance of the inspection itself. The participation of a number of such persons does not alter the true nature of the composition of a particular inspection team entrusted by the Executive Chairman with a specific mission or specific tasks. Those from the BMVC who are used do not perform any task of importance in the framework of an inspection, such as asking questions, evaluating inspection results, submitting reports or other major tasks.

3. The statement made in Butler's letter to the effect that the Iraqi side failed to specify the nature of the sites inspected by the team is untrue. In any event, the names of the sites indicate what they are and no special effort is required to assign them to a category. They were:

(a) The Tourism and Hotels Institute;

(b) The Ibn al-Quff Military Hospital;

(c) The Air Force Medical Centre;

(d) A General Security facilities complex;

(e) Abu Ghraib prison;

(f) An Intelligence Service (Mukhabarat) site;

(g) The Directorate of General Security headquarters.

4. The modalities for entry to sensitive sites were applied at the following locations: the General Security facilities complex; the Intelligence Service (Mukhabarat) site; and the Directorate of General Security headquarters. The following sites were inspected in the normal manner: the Tourism and Hotels Institute; Ibn al-Quff Military Hospital; the Air Force Medical Centre; and Abu Ghraib prison.

It should be noted that, for the inspection of all the sensitive sites we allowed entry to a larger number of inspectors than is the norm for such sites, which is four persons. Nine inspectors entered the General Security facilities complex and the Directorate of General Security headquarters, and six inspectors entered the Intelligence Service (Mukhabarat) site.

5. In visiting the sensitive sites in question, only four BMVC personnel participated together with the members of the team sent under the leadership of Scott Ritter. They were a Jordanian interpreter, an American and two Frenchmen, one of them from the International Atomic Energy Agency. This confirms that it was the original, unbalanced, team that carried out the actual inspection activities.

6. The statement made in the letter to the effect that the official Iraqi statement was issued prior to the completion of the work of inspection on 12 January is untrue. The inspections on that day were completed at 4.40 p.m., and the official Iraqi statement was issued at 6 p.m.

7. Iraq affirms that the composition of the team sent under the leadership of Scott Ritter lacked balance and was incompatible with the modalities for the composition of United Nations teams. Such conduct on the part of the Office of the Special Commission in New York is unacceptable.

One matter that must be mentioned and considered is that the reasons for inspecting these sensitive sites as related by Scott Ritter to his Iraqi escorts raise serious questions concerning the mission assigned to this unbalanced team. Chief Inspector Scott Ritter said that the reason for his inspection of the Tourism and Hotels Institute, the Ibn al-Quff Hospital and the Air Force Medical Centre, which are near or adjacent to the Special Commission's BMVC, was to ascertain the presence of any means of spying on the BMVC. Sophisticated equipment was used in these inspections, including a radar device for

underground detection and other miscellaneous sensors, and they found nothing to support these allegations.

The reason for their inspection of the General Security facilities complex and the Directorate of General Security headquarters was, as stated by Scott Ritter, to determine whether there were sections for telecommunications monitoring and to ascertain, as he claimed, that there was no espionage activity against the Special Commission.

With regard to the Directorate of General Security headquarters he mentioned another reason, saying that there were items of equipment of Polish origin that were imported in 1994 and 1995 in an undeclared manner for a pesticide plant that could be modified as a plant for the production of chemical agents. This accusation is, of course, groundless, and this fact could have been verified by the Polish authorities. The justification that he gave concerning the connection of General Security with this matter, namely that it had provided protection for the movement of the alleged plant from the Jordanian border to Baghdad, is a pretext that was fabricated in order to establish a connection to justify the inspection of a sensitive security service. In connection with the Intelligence Service (Mukhabarat) site, he claimed that in the summer of 1995, between June and August, a number of prisoners had been sent from this site to Abu Ghraib prison and from there to a secret location where tests of chemical and biological agents had been performed on them.

It is clear from these allegations and the rationale offered that the team's objective was to demonstrate the existence of alleged connections between the Iraqi security services and dubious activities. That the team was made up of Americans and British confirms this fact, since it is the United States and British authorities that are giving currency to false allegations with regard to certain activities with a view to misleading the Security Council and world public opinion concerning the true state of affairs in Iraq.

8. The main reason for Iraq's decision to halt the work of this team until such time as it is restructured in a balanced manner is not the nature of the sites that it inspected, since we allowed it to complete the work of inspection for 12 January. The reason is that its composition lacks balance and that this lack of balance has an essentially political significance. As long as the composition of the Special Commission and the composition of the inspection teams reporting to the Security Council remains thus, the embargo will remain in place and will continue to murder Iraqis in the service of the declared United States policy against Iraq.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative